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PRESS RELEASE

USAID Helps Involve Communities in the Implementation of the WHO Integrated Management for Childhood Illnesses Program Third Component

On June 28, 2007 the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) ZdravPlus project in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan organized a completion ceremony for the successful Keeping Children Healthy campaign in Magtymguly Etrap, Balkan Welayat.

This USAID-supported campaign is part of the implementation of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) strategy. This component aims to increase the involvement of the general population and local community in ensuring the health of children. The campaign aimed to increase the number of pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as women with small children, who know how to provide nutritious and balanced diets for their children so that they grow healthy. The campaign also worked to increase the number of people who know the rules of hygiene.

The two-month long Keeping Children Healthy campaign in started on April 29, 2007 at the Magtymguly Etrap hospital. It evolved around a contest for nurses on who will best educate their communities in healthy feeding for children and hygiene. Thirty-two family nurses from the whole etrap participated, working to educate young women with children under five years of age and their family members, including grandmothers and fathers.

Nurses counseled pregnant and breastfeeding women as well as mothers with young children on campaign's key messages; prepared posters; disseminated colorful information materials such as posters, booklets and leaflets. They also competed in cooking skills: all family nurses formed groups and presented balanced national Turkmen dishes for their target groups. The work of nurses was judged by a jury, which visited participant communities and talked to mothers to evaluate the work the nurses had done. Members of the jury also attended the IMCI training as family physicians.

On June 29 the campaign was concluded with a community-level gala event with children dancing and prizes awarded. Representatives from USAID, Balkan Welayat health authorities, and the city health department participated in the ceremony.

This Keeping Children Healthy campaign is one of the many projects and initiatives, supported by the American people through USAID in the country. Since 1993, the American people through USAID have provided over \$70 million in programs that help improve social services, expand access to information, and increase the development of market and agriculture. In health care sector, USAID supports the Government of Turkmenistan in its efforts to adopt international health care practices, implement programs for surveillance and prevention of infectious diseases and illnesses, such as malaria, TB, and HIV/AIDS.

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